CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

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The Withered Hand.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BALL AT COLONEL LONGMORE'S.

YES! there was no doubt about it now; I was in love, really in love, with Edith Longmore. For some time past I had begun to feel that my friendship for Edith was growing into something more than mere friendly regard, something that I myself had not been able to define. Now I knew what it all was—love, strong and overwhelming, had at last asserted its sway. It was jealousy that was giving me this true insight into my feelings.

I was sitting among chaperons and other wall-flowers, refusing to dance, perfectly miserable and half mad with rage, all because Edith, our young hostess, was making herself ordinarily civil to some of her handsome guests. What a fool I must be! How absurd for me, Harry Elton, with a paltry £200 a year, to allow myself to fall in love with a girl of Edith's acknowledged wealth. She was looking so beautiful and graceful, and was, without doubt, the centre of admiration in the ball-room; everyone admitted that she was the belle of the room. I knew but too well that there were lots of young swells eager to obtain her hand—and money, I added, in my ungenerous jealousy.

I could hear that old gossip Mrs. Chatterton talking the matter over with her garrulous neighbour—how Edith had refused the Hon. This, the Sir Something That, and how Colonel Longmore had come into his wealth. The story was well known, and was much talked of. It was an extraordinary affair, certainly.

The Colonel had, ten years before, been comparatively poor. However, one fine morning he received a letter from his banker stating that £100,000 had been placed to his credit. His correspondent further added that he was not at liberty to disclose the name of the giver of this immense sum. Edith also got a letter by the same post saying that an emerald of great value had been presented to her by the same gentleman. Of course, there were several conjectures as to the name of the mysterious benefactor. It was generally understood that the old Colonel made a pretty good guess as to who his friend was; but his curt answer to all inquiries was,



"At the other extremity of the cave a man was squatting, doubled-up like a bale of rags."

THE WITHERED HAND.

BRITISH MUSEUM

"If I did know I wouldn't tell, for it was the express wish of my benefactor that his name should not be known."

Edith was wearing the emerald to-night; it flashed out its bright, green rays as it lay on her fair young neck, the richest of jewels on the fairest of women.

I cursed the stone and its giver as I thought what might have been had the Colonel never come in to this wealth.

"There might have been some chance for me, then," I muttered, half aloud.

"Well! Mr. Elton, you will lose your chance of a dance with me, at any rate, if you don't find a vis-à-vis, once."

It was Edith's sweet voice. In my reverie I had forgotten my long-expected dance—the only one I had been able to secure, for Edith's card was always filled immediately on her entry in a ball-room.

"What has been the matter with you, Mr. Elton?" she continued, when we had taken our places in the quadrille; "you seem as if you were not enjoying our ball, and papa has been flattering himself it has been going off so well."

"And Colonel Longmore has good reason to do so," I answered, "for indeed it has been the grandest affair of the season. Yet I candidly confess, Miss Longmore, that I have *not* enjoyed it; in fact, I have been perfectly miserable."

"And what has made Mr. Elton so *triste* this evening?" She smiled archly as she put the question, and I could see that the little puss had made a pretty good guess at the state of affairs.

She looked *so* pretty, with her roguish eyes laughing at me, that I felt I was on the verge of a confession, when the sparkle of the emerald attracted my attention and reminded me of her wealth.

"Don't chaff, Miss Longmore," I said. "To change the subject, would you mind telling me the value of that green stone you are wearing?"

"Oh! the value of that green stone, as you choose to call it," she replied, "has been estimated at three hundred pounds; but I don't prize it for its intrinsic value; I prize it as the gift of my father's unknown friend. I have often thought I should like to learn his name. Is it not awfully mysterious? I do so enjoy mysteries; and they say that every large jewel has its history, mostly a strange one. I am certain if this one could tell its tale we should hear something terribly interesting. Wizards can read fortunes in crystals by looking into their depths. Do for once be a magician, and look and see if you can learn anything from this!"

We had just finished one part of the first figure of the quadrille, and were standing opposite a large mirror. I could see the reflection of her delicate little hand holding up the jewel for me to examine. I turned and pretended to look at the stone, though I must confess that I was admiring the hand more than the emerald.

"What can you see?" she added; "something very interesting, I'm sure."

"Yes; very interesting!" I replied, still thinking more of her hand than of the stone. "I see that which I would give the world to obtain. If by years of toil and trial—if by going to the most distant parts of the globe I could possess this treasure—I would go"——

"Then go!"

A low, deep voice seemed to hiss these words into my ear. I started and looked up. O God! what was that I saw reflected in the glass opposite? A hand, still holding the emerald; but how changed! The fair, plump flesh was shrivelled and black, as if it had been scorched and dried by the fiery heat of tropical suns; the long, lank fingers clutching the stone were those of no living person. The protruding joints, the dark-stained nails, the parched skin, might have been those of some Egyptian mummy that had lain in his still death-cell a thousand years.

It was a withered hand!

I saw no more; the room seemed to swim round; and I sank on the nearest seat, sick and faint with horror.

* * * * * *

For three weeks I was laid up with a dangerous fever. Whether the spectre hand was some delirious phantom of an incipient fever, or whether some spirit had visited me in its ghastly reality, I knew not. The impression was strong on my mind that it was a warning for me to seek my fortune abroad; and immediately I was sufficiently recovered from my illness I took passage for San Sorrado.

CHAPTER II.

SAN SORRADO.

The country around is one bright blaze of luxuriant vegetation—palms, with their drooping foliage, in thick clumps fringe the distant hills, while the plains are studded with scarlet-flowing brushwood, and brilliant-hued flowers make the air redolent with their perfume. Birds with variegated plumage flit from shrub to shrub, their gorgeous feathers glittering in the sunshine. What a change from my old English scenery!

Twelve months have passed since I settled in my new home—a home built by my own hands; one could hardly call it a house—perhaps it might be classed in the category of huts and hovels. Poor and bare as it was, it was richly ornamented by nature, purple-flowering creepers had already half-covered my humble roof, and humming-birds sported amid the sweet-scented flower-clusters. It was a home that I above all would have appreciated if my soul had not been overladen with sorrow. I was thinking of all that had happened since I was at Colonel Longmore's ball, a year ago. I had learnt from Edith that she loved me, and knew, had the girl her own will, she would have accepted me, poor as I was; but her father—even were I selfish enough to wish it—would never have allowed his daughter to marry a man of my means; for, when Fortune had poured upon him her riches, avarice had come and grown up in his heart. How much nearer was I to wealth since I had left England? Months had passed: industry and patience had somewhat increased my few hundred pounds, and if all went well, I might, at the present rate, have made sufficient in ten years to return home with a large fortune. Ten years! And could I expect Edith to wait all that time? My commonsense replied that it could not be—that it would be cruel and selfish to desire it.

Hark! A cry of pain put an end to my reverie. I started up and listened intently to learn whence the sound came. I had not long to wait. A piercing scream came from a dense grove a few hundred yards to my right. In a few minutes I had reached the spot. The cries of distress came fainter and fainter, proving that I must be quick or I should be too late to be of any service. I rushed through the thick underwood, and found the cause of the disturbance. A girl, of copper complexion, was struggling with a tall, gaunt man. The girl was holding a necklace in her clenched fists: her hands were bleeding, for the man, in his attempt to deprive her of the ornament, had used violence, and crushed her hand with his brutal force.

The ruffian heard me approaching, and looked up with a searching glance.

I could see that, had I shown the least fear, he would have opposed any interference on my part; but, thanks to my strong frame and a muscular arm, I was more than a match for the man; and he saw it too, for, uttering a fierce oath, the villain loosened his hold and escaped into the thick bushes. I knew it would be vain for me to go in pursuit, for a native who had been bred and born in the forest would have soon put a safe distance between us. Unfortunately, I had not my rifle with me, or else I would have tried what a leaden follower would have done to delay him.

The poor girl was lying on the ground half dead with fright, and was weeping bitterly; at the same time she clasped to her bosom the necklace, as if it had been a dear child just rescued from some danger.

I found it a difficult task to soothe the trembling creature, for the terrible outrage from which I had just rescued her had bewildered her so much that it was some time before she could thoroughly understand that I was friendly, and not an accomplice of the ruffianly fellow who had just assaulted her in so cruel a manner.

At last, seeing that I meant her no harm, she looked up like a startled deer, and besought me in piteous accents not to leave her.

"Don't go, kind master, for he will come back and take my necklace. Oh! I would sooner die than part with it. He may beat and bruise me, he may take everything else I have, but he shall not have it. No, no! you will not let him have it. I can see that you are brave and kind, and are not afraid to stay and protect me. Listen! I can hear the bushes move. He is coming back to take it away!"

The poor girl covered down to the ground like a stricken hare. It was but the rustle of some ground animal pushing his way through the underwood that her quick ear detected.

"You need not be afraid, my good girl," I said; "for a man who is coward enough to attack a defenceless woman will never dare to face his equal in strength. Who is the fellow?" I added, "and what does he want from you?"

"Sir, his name is Jagar; he wants my green beads, the necklace my mother gave me when she died, telling me never to part with it, for it is a charm."

"A charm!" I exclaimed. "But what does the man want with a few worthless beads? Surely he would not threaten your life for such a trifling object?"

"They are not worthless, Sir," she replied. "I have been offered gold—gold in plenty—if I would sell them. Look how they glitter in the light!" So saying, she handed to me the ornament.

On examination I perceived that I had greatly underrated them. They were really of much value, for they were uncut emeralds of large size, though a good deal damaged by having been pierced to pass the string through. Still, many an English Duchess would have been proud to wear them. Something in the tint of the green rays recalled to mind the stone I had seen Edith wear at the ball, and my curiosity was greatly excited to inquire further about the necklace. So I said,

"You say your mother gave you this. Can you tell me where she got it from?"

"From the cave," she answered; and as she gave the answer, a shadow passed over her face, as if the very mention of the place recalled some painful reminiscences.

"The cave! What cave?" I inquired.

"Oh! don't ask me. Oh! pray don't! I dare not—I really dare not say. My mother before she died took me to the entrance and said, 'Beeka—for that is my name, and it means "The Brown Dove"—never tell the white strangers of the cave, for they will make you work, work, till death in its mercy shall relieve you from the wretched toil they will force you to undertake. And if at any time you yourself should enter into its dark recesses, wear the green necklace, and the evil spirits who haunt the cave will not harm you.'"

There was a common report in the place that the natives knew of the existence of several caves or mines where precious metals or stones were to be found; but they used extraordinary means to keep the secret of the locality inviolate, exacting oaths, and inflicting heavy penalties on those who should disclose the entrance to the mines. Frequently the Indians brought nuggets of silver into the town of San Sorrado to exchange for blankets, guns, brandy, or other commodities. But even when they were intoxicated they retained enough sense to prevent their betraying the secret. There was a sufficient reason for their pertinacity in refusing to answer any questions on the subject; for formerly, when the white settlers found any of the mines, they used to force their dark brethren to labour in collecting the valuable products. And this would account for the mother's injunction to her daughter not to disclose the entrance to the cave—that is to say, if there were any valuable materials in it.

"Beeka," I inquired, "have you ever been in the cave?"

A terrible fear seemed to overtake her at the question; a troubled expression overspread her countenance; she hid her face in her hands. In a few moments she looked up and replied to my inquiry

"Yes, Sir; I have seen him!"

"Seen him! Seen whom?" I said.

"The man in the cave," she whispered low. "He sits there still. One day when I was passing by the forest where the entrance to the cave is, a sudden irresistible influence seemed to impel me towards the place; if I had wished, I think I could not have helped going. But I held my necklace firm in my hand, and knew that I should suffer no harm, for my mother's words were true. I entered, and *saw the man!*"

She uttered the last sentence word by word, slowly and emphatically, and I could see that she was impressed by the idea of some spirit haunting the cave, and was evidently much distressed at the matter being recalled to her memory. Therefore, though I was naturally curious to hear more about the emeralds and the place whence they were obtained, I forbore pressing her on the subject. Besides, it was high time that I was looking after the girl, for, what with fright and injuries, she was plainly much upset. In fact, it was as much as I could do to get her to say but without her fainting on the way.

When I reached my home I placed her under the care of my house servants, and told them to pay every attention to Beeka.

It was some few days after these startling events that I was busy among my men clearing the forest tracks to prepare new land which to grow my crops. I was leaning against one of the trunks, watching the tall trees falling with a crash, as my men cut them through close at the roots. As they fell prostrate to the ground the forest seemed to shake with the vibration of their fall; the birds flew away, screaming, from the groves, as if protesting against their ancestral homes, among whose branches they had been reared, being so roughly dealt with. The ring of the axes, the shouts of the men, and the chatter of the parrots made the scene a noisy one; it was just one that I preferred above all others, for it made me think less of my despairing prospects and the slight hope I had of improving them.

Suddenly I felt a gentle touch on my shoulder, and, turning round, saw the girl I had protected from the dastardly attack.

"Sir, I have come to thank you for the goodness you have shown to a helpless girl in her distress. I

cannot reward you, for I have nothing to give; but I have sworn by my mother's memory to do anything that is in my power to return your kindness. The time may yet come when I may be of service. If there is aught I can do now, speak; I will obey."

Beska held out her hand and took mine with a grateful pressure. The necklace was still on her neck; it reminded me that she could do me a favour—she might show me the entrance to the cave, where, possibly, there might be more stones of value. So I said,

"Beska, you have promised to do me a service, and it is in your power to oblige me. Will you show me where the cave is from which your mother got the green stones?"

Had my words been daggers, and had I pierced her flesh with each, her face could not have expressed greater agony. A deadly tremor passed through her limbs, her head drooped.

I was deeply sorry that I had broached a subject that evidently distressed her to such a fearful extent, and did all I could to assure her how little I cared about gratifying my curiosity. I tried every argument to convince her that it was a mere whim on my part, and that I attached no importance whatever to discovering the entrance to the cave.

But she took no heed of what I was saying; she seemed to be seized with a sort of trance; her eyes were fixed on vacancy, and her lips moved without any sound. At last she sank on her knees, and, addressing the heavens above, cried out,

"O spirit of my mother! I have promised and I will keep my word; I will show the White Stranger the cave, and will work—work even till death releases me from the toil."

Then, turning to me, she said, "White Stranger, I will take you to the cave; when will you come?"

"Beska," I exclaimed, "I do not want to see it. I will not go, for I, too, fear the spirit." I said this, thinking that she might give up the matter on the idea that I, too, shared her superstitious fears. But she was not to be deceived. Perhaps my countenance belied my words.

"No, the White Stranger fears not the spirit. And what I promised I will fulfil. I shall see *him* again, for he sits there always without moving, without breathing; he never stirs hand or foot, but he rests there thinking, thinking, thinking. Yes, I shall see him again—see him again," she repeated, in a low murmur.

"Poor girl! I won't go, I really won't go," I reiterated.

Her eyes flashed with rage; and I could see that the gentle girl had a strong will of her own.

"But I say *I* will go—choose if you will come with me or not," she added, in a calmer voice. "The White Stranger might protect me from harm; for I swear by my mother's spirit that I will go alone, if you, Sir, will not come with me."

I could see that Beska was determined to repeat her visit, and, while intensely regretting that I had ever mentioned the subject, I thought perhaps my presence might somewhat allay the dread she seemed to experience on a visit to the cave. In fact, I fully believed that by accompanying her I might persuade her of the absurdity of her superstitious fear.

"Yes, Beska," I said, "I will go with you, and I think we shall not find the spirit at home when we pay him a visit this time."

"You will see," she replied, in a low voice.

"When will you go?"

"To-morrow morning, Beska," I said, thinking it best to get over the business as early as possible.

"Will that suit you?"

"No; it must be at night, when the moon has sunk to her rest, when the dark shadow has covered the land, when the grey squirrel has curled himself in his nest, when the bright birds have hid their plumage in the thick leaves. You see yon tall palm? (she pointed to a tall tree standing high above the rest in the forest) Be there this day week, and I will be with you when the sun is down and the moon is hidden." So saying she glided away, and was soon lost amongst the thick underwood of the forest. Beska, the Brown Dove, had flown.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAVE.

I was standing under the tall palm-tree, waiting for Beska.

Two hours ago, the sun sank below the horizon, and there was no moon to take up his sceptre and light the earth with her pale rays. Darkness ruled around.

The scream of the wood-thrush startled from its roost, the dreamy buzz of the ghost-beetle as it passed through the air, and the continuous chirp-chirp of the night grasshopper were the only sounds that broke the stillness.

Ah! there was the crash of falling timber. I knew the sound well; it is one of frequent occurrence in these virgin forests.

When some giant of a tree has flourished its appointed time decay seizes it; then it rots away as years pass, till its core is so eaten away that it cannot even sustain its own weight—this may happen at any moment, in the dead of night, it may be—then it falls crashing down, bringing with it its weaker neighbours; and there it lies, amid a mass of broken boughs, till it sinks again into the soil from which it sprang.

But there was a strange report current in the neighbourhood about this same forest. It had been told to me by several people, but sounded so extraordinary as to appear incredible. They said that some years ago a deformed man (a humpback, it appeared by the description) used to crawl forth from the forest and hurry on with ungainly gait to the town of San Sorrado. Here he used to seek out the lowest gambling haunts, and, as report went, used generally to leave the gambling-table with his pockets fuller than when he went, having, as a rule, the devil's own luck at cards. He never seemed to be without coin, for on the rare occasions on which he was the loser he never was at a loss to put down new stakes, which were at times very large. It was always evening when he came, and invariably before the dawn of day he had disappeared from his gambling comrades. Nobody had ever been able to trace his steps, and no one had ever been able to find his dwelling-place. For a long time past he had desisted from his nocturnal excursions to the town, and it was generally supposed that he must have left the country or perished in his secret hiding-place. I placed little credence at the time to this singular account.

Has Beska forgotten her appointment? Will she, after all, come?

I kept asking myself these questions as I waited through three weary hours.

There was a movement in the bushes; they parted, and Beska was at my side. I could not see her, the darkness was so intense, yet I could feel her warm breath on my cheek as she whispered,

"You must not speak. Follow me." So saying she placed in my hand the end of a cord which she had attached to her waist.

With the wonderful instinct of her race, she passed through the thick forest as if she had been a wild denizen of the wood and possessed the eyes of a wild cat to pierce the gloom of night.

In this way—I following her footsteps like a horse led to the fair—we hurried along on our way, mostly up hill, for about six miles, as far as I could judge, till we came to a clearing; here Beska halted, and, striking a flint, set blaze to a torch.

As the flame flickered up, the lurid glare disclosed the spot where we were standing. It was on a somewhat steep incline; a small circular space had been cleared, and on all sides the huge trunks of trees encircled us, indicating that we were in the very midst of the forest. I had not much opportunity for examining the place. Beska had with remarkable celerity torn away a mass of the lower undergrowth, and disclosed what appeared at first sight to be a deep hole. It was with a start of surprise that I heard her exclaim,

"That is the entrance!"

"Why, there is only just room for a man to crawl in," I remarked.

"Don't speak, but follow me," Beska said, in a tone of reproach.

She seemed to have entirely changed in her nature since our former interview. Now, there was no quiver in her limbs, no hesitation in her manner; but for the leaden hue of her countenance, and the manner in which she kept clutching her necklace, I could have believed that she had quite overcome her fears.

In a few minutes we had passed through the entrance, Beska leading the way and I holding the torch.

I cannot describe the winding passages we traversed, for I was too excited to notice anything. I know that gradually the tunnel-like road expanded, till at length we were able to proceed in an erect position; I know that after this we passed through grottos of incomparable beauty; and I know—O Heavens! I know full well—that at last, after passing through a dismal subterranean vault, we suddenly entered the cave.

My first impulse was to cry out with joyful amazement, for the sight that first met my gaze was gorgeous beyond description.

The dome-shaped roof was studded with innumerable stalactites, hanging like icicles in dense bunches; while around, in thick groups, colossal stalagmites started from the ground; in the flickering light of the torch they seemed to tremble like jewel-pendants. It was, indeed, a wonderful and magnificent sight, and I could have gazed at it for hours.

My attention was attracted by a hoarse cry from Beska. Good Heaven! what madness had seized the child? Her eyes were starting from their sockets, the muscles of her face were twitching violently, and her hand was stretched out pointing into the gloom of the cavern.

"Beska! Beska! What is it?"

"Look!" She ground out the words from her clenched teeth.

I raised the torch and peered into the darkness.

A death-like perspiration bedewed my body, a fainting tremor shook my frame, a sick sensation seized my heart. For the first time I participated in my companion's fears; for the first time I had visible reason for doing so.

At the other extremity of the cave a man was squatting, doubled-up like a bale of rags. From his body there hung the tattered remnants of his clothes, one lank arm rested across his knee, his eyes were sunken and his cheek-bones protruding; his bony feet, shoeless and bare, stretched out from under his dark-stained garments.

I shudderingly saw all this, but my eye was fixed in awful dread on the right hand, which clutched in its lean fingers something on the ground. I must know the form of that skeleton hand. I must have seen before those long crooked fingers. Yes! I recognised the apparition of the ball—the spectre hand that I had seen reflected in the mirror. *It was the withered hand!*

* * * * *

It was some minutes before I could pluck up sufficient courage to approach the figure. Beska, seeing that I dared advance, recovered to a certain extent her equanimity. As I slowly lessened the distance, and the light revealed more clearly the object of our attention, I could see that it was the corpse of a man—a European by dress. The dryness of the atmosphere had preserved the body from entire decay—the flesh and skin had remained on the skeleton. In the right hand there was a sealed letter. As I drew it forth from the bony fingers the hand crumpled under my touch like parched paper, and it was with a feeling of relief that I put the letter into my pocket to peruse under more favourable circumstances.

Turning away from the horrible sight, I proceeded to examine the cave.

Strewn over the floor there were several emeralds in their natural state—uncut and unpolished. I could see by rusty pickaxes and crowbars how the wretched miner had passed his time. There were deep excavations in the walls of the cavern. He must have laboured incessantly for years in his search for the precious stones to have hewn away such immense masses of rock. Poor fellow! he seemed to have been somewhat of a miser, for there were several bags full of silver coins piled up in a heap.

I and Beska loaded ourselves with the money, and, gathering up as many emeralds as we could find, we left the miner alone in his solitude, and started on our return journey.

Beska, carefully re-covering the entrance with bushes, led me back in the same manner as before, for it was still dark. She spoke little on the way; and when we reached our rendezvous at the palm-tree she bade me adieu, refusing to take with her any of the money. And thus we parted. I never saw her again, but years afterwards I heard of her from a friend of mine in San Sorrado. She had married a European settler, and was, by all accounts, well off. She may have revisited the cave.

COPY OF THE LETTER TAKEN FROM THE WITHERED HAND.

"Friend,—I feel that I have but a short time to live. Death's cold hand is already laid upon me; for three days I have been unable to move from the place I am now sitting in. Paralysis has seized my limbs. Before I die I wish to write a few lines to let my friends in England know that I am gone. It may interest you, adventurous stranger, to know something of my past history.

"I am the second son of Walter Longmore. I and my elder brother, George, who is now, I believe, a Colonel in the British Army, were his only children. One day I and George were engaged in a boyish quarrel, when, heated by our dispute, George threw me violently to the ground. I fell heavily against an iron fender and injured my spine. When I rose from my bed of sickness, I found that I was deformed for life—a miserable hunchback. You, like the rest of the world, will pity me. It was this unsolicited pity that drove me from my friends. I would have preferred hate to pity. Their sympathising tones tingled in my ears like scornful mocking. I could no longer stand the galling commiseration, and left England to seek a country where I could hide my wretched deformity from the eyes of my fellow-creatures.

"In my wanderings in these lone forests I discovered the entrance to this cave. I thought it would make a suitable hiding-place, and determined to make it my abode and share its shelter with the bats. It was while domiciled here that I perceived that the cave had been used by human beings before, for there were deep excavations in its sides. I rightly conjectured that they were not made for mere amusement, and so I commenced to hew the rock myself. I soon found what the former owners had been digging for: in the black limestone I found a small green stone—it was an emerald. For years I have been working, and I have come across several stones of great value. Some of these I sold to dealers in San Sorrado, and with the proceeds I tried my luck at the gambling-table. This excitement was the great boon of my life. Every night I hurried from the forest to the roulette-table, as so often happens. I who did not want wealth, had extraordinary luck, and I won large sums of money. I have sent, years ago, £100,000 to my brother George, as a token of my forgiveness and good feeling towards him.

"You, friend, who shall have found my mortal remains, do me one favour, and take as your reward all the valuables that I die possessed of. The favour I ask is but a simple one. Send a copy of this letter to my brother, Colonel Longmore, of Kent House, Northumberland.

"Leave me here unburied. I would like to rest where I have laboured.

"Yrs ——

"Arthur Longmore."

COPY OF AN ANNOUNCEMENT IN "THE TIMES."

On the 12th inst., at the parish church of Turnston, Northumberland, Henry Elton, son of Robert Elton, Esq., of Barrowdale, to Edith, only child of Colonel G. E. Longmore, of Kent House.

THE MAIL-CART ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

A Little ancient inland town,
  Far from the railway engine's shriek,
Begirt by many a moor and down
  And hollow dell and mountain peak—
'Twas Christmas Eve: the Storm-King passed,
And there was vengeance in the blast.

Beside the old Post Office door
  Stood Ben, the driver of the Mail,
The midnight clouds hung blackening o'er,
  And fiercely howled the wintry gale;
Huge snowdrifts buried rock and glen,
But stout of heart was stalwart Ben.

He smote his palms and stamped his feet,
  And blithely whistled, laughed, and sang;
While wind and sleet swept down the street,
  And merrily the church bells rang.
His honest heart, by love kept warm,
Feared not the fury of the storm.

Brave index of the British prime,
  With well-knit frame and sinewy hand,
Like those stern chiefs of olden time,
  Who shrank not from the foeman's brand.
His plighted vows had long been given
To one sweet maid as fair as heaven.

She dwelt full twenty miles away,
  Her parents kept the village inn,
Next day would be the wedding day
  Of handsome Ben and charming Min;
He started gaily, blew his horn,
And hailed with joy his bridal morn.

Love's happy dream, his chestnut mare,
  His red Mail Cart by all admired,
The Christmas treasures in his care,
  His manly breast with valour fired;
He haply bore sweet words to thrill,
Hearts parted long, but faithful still.



"That haggard, ghastly face she knew—a swain discarded met her view."

THE MAIL-CART ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

"Ho! gently, startled steed!" said he,
  "Thy instincts safer than my sight
Through forests roaring like a sea,
  And chasms yawning left and right,
'Mid hurricanes of snow and hail,
We bear to-night the Christmas Mail."

Through elbowed lanes as grim as death,
  By thickets, pools, and gorges wide,
O'er-arched like a funeral wreath,
  The fiery courser dashed with pride.
Her head was grasped by four masked men.
"Hands off, ye villains!" shouted Ben.

Ah, little knew that hideous crew,
  The scythe-sweep of Ben's brawny arm,
When from his throne him down they drew.
  'Twas nerved by love's resistless charm.
Back from his blows with curse and yell,
Three monsters in the deep ditch fell.

He dragg'd the other on his cart,
  Grasping his gurgling throat, and bound
His hands and feet; then, like a dart,
  The steed flew o'er the frozen ground.
In Ben's strong grip the ruffian lay,
  Just as a lion holds his prey.

Shot after shot flashed from the rear,
  Too late to check his homeward speed;
One bullet whistled past his ear,
  Another struck his trembling steed.
He knew it not, for on she sped,
And by the village inn fell dead.

And there stood Minnie at the door,
  With horror stricken at the sight,
When from the wretch the mask she tore,
  Whose features made her faint with fright.
That haggard, ghastly face she knew—
A swain discarded met her view.

The steed lay stiffened in the snow,
  Where foam and blood commingling ran;
And as Ben's tears began to flow,
  The brute seemed nobler than the man;
He said, in sorrow's mournful tone,
"She's saved my life and lost her own."

He set his captive rival free;
  For mercy is the precious gem
Our great All-Father loves to see
  Bedeck the Christmas diadem.
Chime on, chime on, ye olden bells!
Of Love divine your music tells!

Fair dawned the merry Christmas morn,
  The bridegroom and the bride to bless;
Rich jewels decked the brier and thorn,
  And Winter wore his ermine dress.
The cottage crowns the village dale,
And Ben still drives the Country Mail.

Sheldon Chadwick

THE LAST CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE OLD COUNTRY.—SEE "SOUTHWARD HO!"



THE LAST CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE OLD COUNTRY.—SEE "SOUTHWARD HO!"

Southward Ho!

OUR LAST CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE OLD COUNTRY.

I, Joe Benson, landed in England, that morning, one of the happiest of men.

Naturally so. My one true friend was with me, and he is one of those rare good fellows who think with you, laugh with you, and act with you as only kindred souls can. Jack Roden and I had proved our friendship as true as steel, in a hundred ways, at the Australian diggings. Ah! I could tell you of days of hunger and laborious toil in vain, and days and nights of fever. But, happily, all our trials only bound us more firmly to each other. And when luck at last rewarded our perseverance, and we made a small fortune of £10,000 apiece by the chance discovery of a rich vein of auriferous quartz, why, "Round the world, and home again" was the ditty I chanted with all my heart. No sooner did I mention to Jack my strong desire to visit the old folks at home, than Jack—Australian by birth and long ago interested in the Old Country by my patriotic praises of England—directly said he would accompany me. So, without standing on the order of our going, we started at once from Port Jackson. The voyage safely over, it may be imagined with what joyous expectation I looked forward to a hearty welcome home.

The misery of that home when I reached it I shall never forget.

We had driven down from the station in a fly. Before me, at length, was the straggling Cornish village of my boyhood and youth; beyond, the waste of waters which had in childhood filled me with an irresistible longing for travel and adventure. As an epicure leaves a bonne bouche to the last, so I was delaying the crowning pleasure of clasping father and mother, sisters and brother, to my heart, and was halting while I pointed out to Jack the lions of my young days—my favourite bathing-nook, down there where he saw the break in the rocks, where the fresh, green sea was of crystal clearness, tempting one in calm summer weather to dive to the lowest depths; further to the right the shed of the life-boat, in the practice-trips of which it used to be my delight to take part, listening with the awe natural to a youngsters while the tough old fishermen, their ruddy, gnarled faces seemingly carved rudely out of mahogany, told ponderous yarns one against the other; and, away yonder, the cosy nest of an inlet whither their sea-birds of boats flew when laden with pilchards.

It doubled the pleasure of my recollections to note the interest Jack took in these reminiscences of mine; and, still keeping back what I thought would be the pleasantest incident of the day, I might have gone on prosing longer had I not been shunted off the past by Jack making an inconsequential remark that told me my last reminiscence at least was thrown away.

A girl was approaching, and there was Jack gazing at her more intently than I had ever seen him gaze at woman before. No wonder. A good second look assured me it was my little pet sister of old, now grown into a pretty, lissom lass of nineteen. Five years' absence had not sufficiently changed me to prevent Lucy from recognising her old playmate. Exclamations over, we were in a moment locked in each other's arms. Pausing in the shower of kisses, I was raining down on her sweet, glad, rosy face, a cough from Jack reminded me I had an introduction to make.

"Lucy! My best friend, Jack Roden!"

Jack's fair face flushed up quite handsome as they shook hands for the first time. While Lucy showed due courtesy to her brother's friend, there yet seemed stealing over her a subdued air of reserve, accounted for, I thought, by certain passages in letters of mine, banteringly informing Lucy I had found in Jack the very husband for her.

But, gaily telling Lucy of our good fortune as we neared the dear old home, the poor girl's face grew more and more serious. Bursting into tears, she sobbingly said at last,

"Thank God you've come back, Joe! Father's ruined! Those bills on the wall are about to-morrow's sale. *Do you* bear up, Joe, and help and console them at home."

How this sudden news stunned me—how the bright picture I had conjured up of a happy reunion in the old parlour bright with the glamour of long ago became in the reality a picture of the deep though quiet, misery of broken-down gentility—how my family was reduced to the alternative of either accepting my small fortune while I left them for Australia again to begin life afresh, or of accompanying Jack and me to New South Wales—need not be dilated upon in this sketch. Let it be said at once that on the night of my return I heard for the first time that all my father's means had been swept away on that terrible Black Friday so bitterly remembered in hundreds of wrecked homes throughout the country. "It's no use crying over spilt milk" is a favourite motto of mine. So, with Jack's aid, I at length persuaded the old folks and the young folks to trust themselves to us to guide them to the safe haven of Port Jackson.

The sadness of that last Christmas Eve in the old country is too mournful a subject to dwell upon, especially as an Artist has made the lugubrious farewell gathering live on another page. Tried I my best to infuse a little of the glad feeling of the season into them, I only failed. In Longfellow's apt words:—

> The very tones in which we spoke
> Had something strange, I could but mark;
> The leaves of memory seemed to make
> A mournful rustling in the dark.
>
> Oft died the words upon our lips,
> As suddenly, from out the fire,
> Built of the wreck of stranded ships,
> The flames would leap and then expire.
>
> * * * *
>
> The windows rattling in their frames,
> The ocean roaring up the beach,
> The gusty blast, the flickering flames,
> All mingled vainly in our speech;
>
> Until they made themselves a part
> Of fancies floating through the brain,—
> The long-lost ventures of the heart,
> That send no answer back again.

But let not the allusion in the last lines make me revert to *my* long love-dream of the past; nor let me waste space by telling the oft-told story of a voyage to Australia; but just a few words for that perilous incident which brought Jack and Lucy at length fairly heart to heart, and which led to

A CHRISTMAS BETROTHAL IN AUSTRALIA.

Fire! to add to our other calamities!

Past the window flew the panic-stricken herd of intermingled kangaroos, dingoes, and emus. They were safe—but we?

The hurricane was blowing the bush fire ominously near our farm, and the reverberating gusts of wind, with the terrible roaring of the approaching flames, filled us with the direst fear.

Happily the gale had previously uprooted and felled the trees nearest our dwelling and the out-houses.

Providentially, we thought, the devastating holocaust might only shave Benson Farm.

Black night was turned into red day. To be ready for the worst, 'twas the one duty of Jack and I to rescue the unconscious sleepers.

"Good God! Jack, the house *has* caught. This is not the moment for false delicacy to stop us.—Up with you and bring Lucy out in safety. I'll rush up the other staircase, and rouse father and the rest. Once out of the house, we meet at the creek, mind!"

Even as I spoke a thin volume of smoke was curling out from the passage that led to the dairy. So, rescue at lightning-speed was necessary, or burnt the dear ones would be in their sleep, as our one retreat threatened to be cut off.

Denser smoke almost blinded me as I dashed along the corridor up stairs. Holding breath, I reached the further door in safety. I threw the door open, flew in, and closed it with a bang that roused father. Thank God! father was alive to the critical state of affairs at once. A crackle, a puff of stifling smoke, and fire was already in this very room, where mother alone seemed helpless. Her shriek called up re-echoing cries from my sisters. In mad haste we gained the door, supporting the now faint figure of mother with us. Bending low, we quickly carried her, as near the floor as possible, to the landing, where the girls had happily assembled by this time, each with a blanket or counterpane as her only clothing.

The staircase was still open, though every moment increased the density of the smothering smoke.

Jack, maybe, had saved young Frank and Lucy by this time, and might be awaiting our arrival at the creek.

Huskily inspiriting them with this news, father and I hurried the women folk safely down stairs—Phew! I fancy I yet retain the sense of that stifling sensation—hurried them safely out by the front door, to be greeted by the sight of the outhouses in flames. Our one way to the creek cut off, the touching bleating of the burning sheep mingling with the agonising neighing of the imprisoned horses, and the eastern end of our house in flames, I grew dizzy for a moment.

To conduct them to the cow-shed across the road for shelter was the obvious thing to do. The storm-wind, which had just enabled the fringe of the bush-fire to catch the house, had mercifully changed. The wreck and ruin of the flame-wave remained far and near, but we were out of danger, so far as our lives were concerned.

And Lucy, Frank, and Jack? Had they really escaped to the creek?

Amid the fall of myriad sparks and the glare of the fire, it was difficult to think rationally.

But a terrible wail, as of a female voice, set all doubts at rest.

They were *not* yet from the house. Escape by the front—the side facing inland, whence we rushed but a few minutes ago—was impossible. Flames were bursting out of each window. Jack's only other outlet was also perilous, if not impassable, for the sheds and shrubs inclosing our land were now in flames right up to the very edge of the cliff.

Even if they gained the verge of the cliff before the flames enveloped the whole house, there was the sea—smoother now, for the wind had gone down—twenty feet below them!

We looked at one another with blanched faces, each fearing the worst, none of us able to do a single thing for their salvation.

No further cry came from the fire. The one shriek must have been Lucy's death-shriek.

"It's above that poor Lucy and Jack's wedding will take place," I sighed to myself.

* * * *

The story of Jack's heroic rescue of Lucy and Frank we were never tired of hearing at our first Christmas picnic. The glass at 100 deg. in the shade, you may be sure we quaffed many a glass of Australian wine under the welcome shade of our neighbour Captain Sidney's palms, happily spared the ravages of the bush fire. Lucy tried Jack in that terrible fire, and at last found him to be the true metal I had all along known him to be. Escaping from the burning house with her in his arms, and my young brother Frank following, he fled boldly down the centre of that fiery avenue, and, bidding Frank do as he did, leapt into the sea below, and supported them, up to their necks in water, until we rescued them an hour or so after. Well, of course, we forgot all our troubles in heartily celebrating the betrothal of Jack and Lucy; and, although we had at present only the hospitality of Captain Sidney to look to for the very necessities of life, yet there could have been few gladder parties than our picnic that Christmas Day.

NEW MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS.

The music publishers have certainly done their shar towards making our Christmas merry and the New Year happy.

Metzler merits special praise. Do our fair readers desire a full programme of dance music, all in one portable volume, to take with them to their Christmas merry-meetings? Let them provide themselves, then, with "Metzler's Album of Dance Music," beautifully bound in cloth, and full of capital waltzes with "go" in them, popular quadrilles, polkas, mazurkas, and galops, by Charles Godfrey, Arditi, and others. The Florence waltz, included in the series, will be remembered as one of Godfrey's sweetest and most swinging waltzes, and is beyond question one of the most fascinating airs that ever sent waltzers spinning. No. 34 of the same publishers' "Musical Bijou" contains no less than seventeen sacred pieces for sixpence; while "Metzler's Bijou Pianist," a handy cloth volume, actually gives thirty-six excellent pieces for the price of one sheet of music! A musical handbook invaluable to the comic and sentimental singer alike is "Metzler's Bijou Christy Minstrel Song-Book," a choice collection of fifty of these favourite melodists' best songs. Here, then, is only one musical firm, which can furnish every household possessing a pianist and a vocalist with a little inexpensive musical library that would enable the purchaser to enjoy at home bright reminiscences of the opera, Riviére's Concerts, a soirée of the Sacred Harmonic Society, and the dashing and tuneful minstrelsy of the Christys.

New songs there also are galore. Messrs. Robert Cocks and Co., New Burlington-street, possess in Mr. W. T. Wrighton one of the very best song-writers of his day. Like his most musical "Music of her Voice," Mr. Wrighton's "Visions of By-gone Days" takes the ear captive at once by its charming air, and is even yet more touching. "Speak Well of the Absent" is another good song of his, the seasonable aphorisms suggested by the title being set to an easy and melodious tune. Mrs. J. Worthington Elgar's new sacred song, "Low at Thy Feet," is issued by the same publishers, and is a song of very easy compass. Marriott's novelties in dance music are also among the Christmas publications of Messrs. Robert Cocks and Co., while their "Richmond Quadrille," by Adam Wright, will doubtless introduce *l'été* to many winter gatherings, composed, as it is, of familiar airs set in well-marked time.

Miss Elizabeth Philp has just added a worthy trio to her long list of bright and tender songs. "Happy" is written in her happiest style. "Happy," is a cheerful, winsome love song, and happy should the lover be who is fortunate enough to o'erhear his sweetheart singing "Happy." Miss Philp's melodious air is wedded to charming verse by Miss Louisa Gray, and "Happy" is published by Messrs. Cramer, Wood, and Co. Equally fortunate has Miss Philp been in the words of "Spring Buds," a sweet, glad some song, full of the cheering gladness of spring with its warbling birds, and fields "all rejoicing till the buds return, and every hill and valley with glowing rapture burn," as Mr. E. Ransford poetically has it. The same gentleman furnishes the verses to Miss Philp's "Dead Leaves," a soft air, with a slightly melancholy strain, befitting the theme running through it.

Winter Evening Amusements.—Our advertisement columns prove that the inventors of card-games show no lack of ingenuity. "The Sovereigns of England" and "Snap" are two of John Jaques's capital round games, the coloured cards of each pack affording instruction and entertainment combined. "The Sovereigns" freshening one's recollection of British Monarchs and the floral designs of "Snap," not only enabling one to enjoy "Snap," "Snap snorum" under a new guise, but also giving the player an idea of the language of flowers. Clarke's "Most Laughable Thing on Earth" may also be recommended to family circles not already outlawed by a cheap, mirth-moving recreation. Youngsters delighting in prismatic toys may suit their fancy either with Messrs. Dean and Sons "Metabolescope" and "Colour Top" or their "Self-Acting

Champion Wrestlers." The Stereoscopic Company's scientific novelty is "The Temperament Tester," which thousands of young people will doubtless have recourse to this Christmas, after the customary performance of the mistletoe rite. Their "Chameleon Barometer" and "Cannon of Peace" should become similarly popular.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS.

(*See Illustration, page 396.*)

1. WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

The compliments of the season, with more rhyme than reason,
Are showered about at this time of the year;
And, though mostly they please, yet sometimes they tease,
And produce quite the t'other of jolly good cheer.
Now, to keep in the fashion, I send you a greeting;
But, instead of the time-honoured nonsense repeating,
A word of advice I will give my old friend,
And I trust that my counsel may never offend.

When you go for a stroll Angelina to meet,
If you see her advancing, with smiles, down the street,
Pray be careful, while o'er the ground gallantly striding,
Not to step where the boys have been wickedly sliding,
Or else you may chance to come down with a crack,
At your lady-love's feet, on the broad of your back.

2. THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON.

From slumbers profound, for the past night or two,
I 've been wakened by sounds most distressing,
Caused by friends armed with cornets, euphoniums, trombones,
To welcome old Christmas professing.
My childhood's best friend, I trust you will spend
Old Christmas with frolic and glee;
And from those unmusical demons, the Waits,
May your neighbourhood ever be free!

3. YE CHRISTMASSE GREETINGE.

When you do the Roman Fall,
If, by chance, a big snowball
Trips off your Sunday hat;
Never get your dander riz,
For the boys will only quiz,
Call you "cure" and "flat,"
Throw their snowballs all the more,
Each one bigger than before.

7. CHRISTMAS DELIGHTS.

At the corner stands a fountain,
Whence the crystal waters flow;
Thither neighb'ring youths and maidens,
Armed with divers vessels go.
At that cold and slipp'ry corner,
Will thou meet me, Susan Jane?
Say but Yes, and I'll be there
To carry home thy pail again.

5. MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU.

I never *did* love Christmas,
'Tis far too cold for me;
The charms of frost, with ice and snow,
I never yet could see.
Let poets rave of yule-logs,
Of holly, bright and gay,
Let Christmas bells ring o'er the lea,
And Robin sing his lay—
To me it is a season
Of aches and grievous ills;
Coughs, chilblains sore, chapped hands and feet
And thievish tradesmen's bills.
Yet, since it is the custom
At Christmas-tide to send
Some trifling gift to show that we
Have not forgot a friend,
I 'll post this carte of Christmas,
Quite brimming o'er with fun,
And I 'm sure I 'll not be sorry
When the spring-time hue has begun.

6. MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY.

When you gaze on this nobby plum-pudding,
Fit emblem of Christmas the jolly,
Nice and sweet, smoking hot, and with almonds stuck o'er,
Adorned with a sprig of bright holly,
Pray believe that e'en so is my heart smoking hot
With true love, that good old-fashioned folly.
And, if at your board I should happen to dine,
I hope you will have a plum-pudding as fine.

7. WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

I like to see two lovers
Upon a frosty morning
Skating boldly o'er the ice,
All danger bravely scorning,
And when such a stalwart hero,
With a maid so fair to see,
Together risk a ducking,
It fills my heart with glee.
And my choicest blessing I 'll bestow
When you shall married be.

8. I WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Dearest Auntie, pray be careful,
When the winter storms you face;
Blust'ring Boreas hugs most rudely
Ladies in his rough embrace.
Once I knew an ancient damsel
(Like yourself, a trifle stout),
Whirled about by fierce North-Easters,
And her Gamp turned inside out.
Till at last I feared that she
Would be borne off bodily.

9. THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON.

Under the mistletoe-tree
How awfully jolly 'twill be
In my arms thy form to catch,
And from thy lips a kiss to snatch.
How terribly jealous *some people* will be
When this audacious theft they see.
They 'd do it themselves, but would ne'er have the "cheek,"
Though you stood 'neath the mistletoe-bough for a week.

10. MANY HAPPY RETURNS.

When the snow lies on the ground,
Then the Snow-Boy goes his round,
Making quiet streets resound
To his dreadful cry:—
"Clean your doorstep?" And to do it
You must pay him, or you 'll rue it
When the Bobby comes to view it,
As he passes by.

11. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

When this little card you see,
Think, my dearest Cook, of me;
And spare a little slice or two
Of Pudding for your Robert true.

LIVE IN LOVE; 'TIS PLEASANT LIVING.

Be not harsh and unforgiving,
Live in love; 'tis pleasant living.
If an angry man should meet thee,
And assail thee indiscreetly,
Turn not thou again and rend him,
Lest thou needlessly offend him;
Show him Love hath been thy teacher,
Kindness is a potent preacher:
Gentleness is o'er forgiving—
Live in love; 'tis pleasant living.

Why be angry with each other?
Man was made to love his brother;
Kindness is a human duty,
Meekness a celestial beauty.
Words of kindness, spoke in season,
Have a weight with men of reason;
Don't be others' follies blaming,
And their little vices naming;
Charity's a cure for railing,
Suffers much; is all prevailing.
Courage, then, and be forgiving—
Live in love; 'tis pleasant living.

Let thy loving be a passion,
Not a complimental fashion!
Live in wisdom, ever proving
True philosophy is loving:
Hast thou known that bitter feeling,
'Gendered by our hate's concealing?
Better love, though o'er so blindly,
E'en thy foes will call it kindly.
Words are wind; Oh, let them never
Friendship's golden love-cords sever!
Nor be angry, though another
Scorn to call thee friend or brother.
"Brother," say, "let's be forgiving—
Live in love; 'tis pleasant living."

EDWARD CAPERN.

LONDON "HAUNTED HOUSES."

A CHRISTMAS NUMBER without a ghost story would scarcely be considered complete. The latest revelations respecting the "Haunted Houses" of London save us, however, from doing violence to our reason by inventing a fresh ghost story. A great deal of curiosity has been excited for a long period in reference to a number of large houses in Stamford-street (Blackfriars), Snowhill, Newington, and other parts of London, which have for nearly half a century been allowed to remain empty, and suffered to get into a ruinous state, the rental value of the property being many thousands per annum. One house in Stamford-street, at the corner of Hatfield-street, which was formerly let for £100 per annum, has been empty more than forty years. The various premises were popularly known as "haunted houses," and crowds have collected occasionally round them, particularly

THE HOUSES IN STAMFORD-STREET,

upon the report that a "ghost" had been seen walking about some of the rooms. Their real history appears to be this:—The property originally belonged to a solicitor named Reed, a man possessed of a large fortune; and he, through a mere whim, determined not to let any portion of this property. He died some five-and-twenty years ago, leaving, it is said, strict injunctions to his widow to carry out the same course. His directions were obeyed, and at the death of the widow the same injunctions were given to the daughter, until her death, which took place, last Monday, week suddenly. By this event the condition of affairs in relation to the property will, in all probability, now be changed, and the estate will be put to some useful purpose. The habits of the deceased lady were most penurious. She resided in one of the houses in Stamford-street, her only establishment consisting of one old woman; and the residence of the "old miser," as she was generally termed, could easily be recognised by its dirty and dilapidated appearance. Periodically the two old women would make a visit to the other houses in the street, the time chosen being generally evening. With lantern in hand, they would go through the different rooms of the large ruinous buildings, and these visits gave rise, no doubt, to

THE "GHOST" RUMOURS

that were rife, and were the cause of the crowds assembling to see the light gleaming from the windows. Almost immediately after the death became known it appears that parties claiming to be the heirs-at-law of the deceased took possession of the house where she resided, and among the strange rumours that are afloat in reference to the subject is one, that a sum of money amounting to nearly £20,000 was found hoarded in different parts of the house, and concealed in all manner of out-of-the-way places. At first it was rumoured that the deceased had died without making a will, but it has since been stated that a testamentary document has been discovered. It will perhaps be recollected that a few years ago some persons took forcible possession of one of the houses in Stamford-street, and set up some claim to the property; but it was shown that they had no legal title, and they were forcibly ejected by order of a magistrate. Since then the whole of the property has remained in the same condition as before.

A LATE PARISIAN CELEBRITY.

A PARISIAN character, very celebrated, yet scarcely known to those not thoroughly acquainted with the arcana of Paris life, has (the *Daily News'* Paris correspondent informs us) just died at the Lariboisiere Hospital:—

"I speak of Dinochau, the landlord of a common-looking wine-shop at the corner of the Rue Navarin, in the Quartier Breda. On the first floor of this house was a table-d'hôte at thirty sous, much frequented by actors, singers, artists, and journalists. The dinner, which Dinochau's mother used to cook and put upon the table while he attended to the wine department, was, when markets were well supplied and provisions cheap, far better than the five-franc banquet of the expensive hotels. In years gone by I have taken English friends, some of whom will read this, to dine at Dinochau's. It was

ONE OF THE SIGHTS OF PARIS,

which no foreigner would have found out without a guide. The manners of the place were free and easy. In hot weather I have seen the men throw off their coats and dine with shirt-sleeves displayed. Ladies were admitted; and, as no references were required, they were naturally not of a class to be received at Almack's. It was not at all unusual for claret and champagne to be put on the table after dinner, on the pretext that it was the fête-day of one of the company, who took the liberty of treating everybody. The evening seldom finished without songs; and I have heard at Dinochau's a first tenor of the opera. At Dinochau's I have seen Gustave Doré, before he had made his reputation as a painter, playing the violin with the skill of a Paganini, his fair neighbours affectionately styling him, 'Mon petit Gustave.' Nadar, of balloon and photographic celebrity, was a frequenter of Dinochau's. Charles Monselet, the wit and gourmand, and now the moralist, was a constant attendant at Dinochau's, and on account of his enormous appetite volunteered to pay double for the double portions which he required. Etienne Carjat, a painter of genius, who is now making a fortune by the more certain, though less brilliant, career of a photographer, used in those days to sketch caricatures of the table-d'hôte. Total strangers of the feminine sex would say to him, 'Oh, mon cher Carjat, fais moi ma charge.' He often complied, and the walls of the dining-room in the Rue Navarin are hung with his productions. One of the oldest and best is a caricature of Dinochau himself, with a corkscrew in a bottle, addressing himself to a party hesitating whether they could make up money enough to pay for it, and saying, 'Well, is the cork to come out?' Dinochau freely gave credit to old customers, and times have been lately so hard that many abused the privilege. The main part of the fortune he leaves consists of £5000 of book debts for unpaid dinners of 30 sous!"

A STORY

USED TO BE TOLD of the late Madame Emile de Girardin, and was received in Paris with none the less gusto because a certain flavour of irreverence seemed to go with the telling of it. The lady—herself one of the most gifted women her time produced—had an immense opinion of the political wisdom and genius of her husband. One day, during some crisis in the affairs of France, two friends, both of the political world, called to visit her. They talked earnestly, and rather gloomily, of the situation; and at last one of them remarked that nothing now could save France "but He who is above."

"THEN," exclaimed Madame de Girardin eagerly, "hadn't I better call him down?" For she assumed that the allusion must be to her husband, who was writing in his room on an upper floor.



THE CHRISTMAS TRIUMPH.



THE CHRISTMAS TRIUMPH.

THE CHRISTMAS TRIUMPH.

Plum-pudding achieved a real Christmas triumph that year when a good match-making matron first thought of including the bridal symbol in the delicious compound. This kindly custom was evidently not neglected at the Christmas dinner limned on our centre pages. The billing and cooing of one couple proves that at least two of that merry party will manœuvre not a little to obtain the ring. Success to either; and may good digestion wait on appetite! But deep love, as we all know, is allied to sorrow.

"The course of true love never did run smooth;" and what sorrow in love is there in that story of the boy who, upon one delicious Christmas Day, having eaten his fill of pudding, was observed to burst into an uncontrollable passion of tears. "What are you crying for, Johnny?" said his father's guest, unaware of Johnny's weakness, or rather of the strength of his affection for pudding. "Because," said Johnny, sobbing vehemently, "I can't eat any more pudding!" "Fill your pockets, my little man!" said his father's guest, with consolatory sympathy and sage advice. "Oh!" replied Johnny, as distinctly as the paroxysm of his mighty tribulation would permit him, "I have! I have!"

> Oh, happy love, where love like this is found!
> Oh, heartfelt rapture! bliss beyond compare!
> I've paced much this weary mortal round,
> And sage experience bids me this declare:
> If heaven one taste of heavenly pleasure spare,
> One cordial in this melancholy vale,
> 'Tis——

'Tis in delicious boyhood, on Christmas Day, when the pudding is served, and a large slice, smoking hot, is put into our plate by our fond mother. To talk of love under a hawthorn tree, in comparison with such delight as that, shows little knowledge of the real sources of enjoyment.

Christmas Sports.

A CHRISTMAS DIP.

The observation that we are thoroughly one with the Serpentine swimmers—in theory—is a trite one (if not a Triton: well, in the season of Christmas pantomimes it ought to be excusable, if ever, to try it on). Yuletide after yule-tide we have pointed out—to others—the great advantage in taking part in the Christmas-morning swim of the Serpentine Swimming Club. Punctually as ever, these Icelandic swimmers bathed before breakfast during the late frost. Their assemblage, therefore, next Christmas morning at the old elm-tree (time, 7.30 sharp) may be depended upon. They begin their Christmas holiday with a swimming handicap, at the south-west end of the Serpentine. May the earliest riser win; and a Merry Christmas to each Leander, say we!

BOXING-DAY PEDS.

The holiday-maker on Boxing Day desirous of enjoying a little healthy outdoor excitement before sitting down to the pantomime of his choice can, at least, fully indulge his taste for pedestrianism next Tuesday. Lillie-Bridge Grounds, Brompton; the Prince of Wales's Grounds, Bow; and the Star Grounds, Fulham, all offer attractive bills of fare, which are likely to draw some of the fleetest professional runners in London. A mile-and-a-half match between Hazael and E. Mills for £50 is among the specialties at Bow. *Bell* says both men are in active training. Hazael is located in the suburbs of the west, while Mills is taking his canters at Bow.

"A TREAT FOR THE FANCY."

One of the most curious Christmas entertainments announced in *Bell* is Jemmy Shaw's fixture for Christmas night. It is hinted that the spectacle of "the veteran fancier himself" will rejoice the eyes of all true sportsmen; but the great attraction will be a "grand show of toy dogs, &c."

CRICKETING TALK FOR CHRISTMAS.

THE DEMAND FOR CRICKET REFORM,

in consequence of the immense batting power developed by Mr. W. G. Grace, leads the cricketing authority of *Bell's Life* to give judgment thus fairly:—"The controversy on the subject of cricket reform, which for the last few weeks has found expression in our columns, leads irresistibly to the one practical conclusion that, whatever may be the merits of the question, the majority of cricketers would be disgusted with any alteration whatever of the laws of cricket, and every individual cricketer would be disgusted with any alteration which was not his own pet alteration.

GOOD ALL-ROUND PLAYING NEEDED.

"Those who advocate the cause of the bowler point to the enormous scores which are frequently made. The true answer to this argument is that not the exceptional but the average score must be taken into account. We have no means of ascertaining the fact; but we fancy that, if an average could be struck of all the innings in all the matches, great and small (home, foreign, and colonial), it would be found to be much under 100 runs. And this, we submit, is the true way of judging the question. But we will go further. The average of the completed innings of the Marylebone Club and Ground in 1871 is only 157 runs. Now, this is really not an excessive number; and yet the Marylebone Club, in all probability, taking its matches all round, plays the strongest batting team in the world. If extraordinary innings of 400 or 500 runs are occasionally played, the very chance that such may be the case adds a charm to the game which we should be sorry to be deprived of. The elasticity and uncertainty of cricket is its greatest beauty. But, in order to force us into reform, those who clamour for change must show us that the majority of innings are harassing to the bowlers and wearisome to the spectators. And this, we think, they have failed, or not attempted, to do.

"There are, nevertheless, two matters in which most people would agree that reform is urgently needed. In the first place, there is an utterly needless and irritating waste of time and want of punctuality in the conduct of matches. The Marylebone Club sets an excellent example in this respect; but at the Oval, and at most, if not all, of the county grounds the time of play is unnecessarily curtailed by delay in beginning, by an indefinite interval for lunch, and by long pauses between the innings. For allowing such delays the managing officers of the different clubs are chiefly to blame. It is in their power, for the most part, to enforce punctuality, and we hope that for the future they will be more attentive to their duty. In the second place, our amateur bowling is falling off year by year, in proportion as our amateur batting is developing itself. If this continues it will end in amateur and professional players taking different departments of the game, and the 'Gentlemen v. Players' match will be nothing more than an annual 'Batting v. Bowling' match. The carelessness of amateurs with regard to the practice of bowling is chiefly caused by the fact that the sympathies of the spectators are all given to the batsman. In a school Eleven the good bowler is looked upon as a useful and indispensable man, but the brilliant batsman is the idolised hero. Perhaps this is natural, because the skill of a batsman is more readily discerned than the skill of a bowler; but it should be remembered that an effective bowler is always the mainstay of his side, while the best batsman may be out the first ball. The most practical answer to the cry for cricket reform would be a general improvement in amateur bowling."

SKATING AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

The skating on Dec. 9 at Sydenham is described by the *Sporting Life*:—"With one exception only the whole of the various pieces of water at the Crystal Palace are open to the public for skating upon, and full advantage is taken by that body of the privilege. The exception is the round basin on the second terrace, where the large fountain and its surrounding smaller jets present too many obstacles to enable any person to skate with freedom, while it is also as well to avoid the damage that would be done in case of any of the jets being injured, and which would entail a great expense upon the management. It may be as well to premise that the ice at the Crystal Palace presented, on Saturday, as great a contrast as can be well imagined to that in the various London parks. Smooth, firm, and yet elastic, it was as great a pleasure to skate upon this ice as it would have been an infliction to attempt such a feat upon the various pieces of water which we visited in town on Friday. As is usual at this time of year, the directors of the palace place the northern basin on the lower terrace at the disposal of

THE CRYSTAL PALACE SKATING CLUB,

the members of which, with their friends—male and female—keep the ice in perfect order, and reserve it entirely for their own use. It is a very pretty sight to see the ladies gliding along with consummate ease, and enjoying more exercise in an hour than they would probably take all the winter through were it not for the ice affording them an opportunity of exhibiting their proficiency in the art of skating. The more juvenile members enjoy the amusement quite as much as their elders, and children of ten or twelve years old put to shame by their performances many a more sedate but less learned and confident skater.

"The Crystal Palace has a great advantage over our public parks, inasmuch as, to a certain extent, the rough element is entirely absent, the prohibitive tariff of 1s. proving wonderfully efficacious in keeping the place select. Hence, though there are always a certain number present anxious to turn an honest penny by sweeping the ice or helping on with or letting skates, there are none of the mixed crowds that are to be found on our public pieces of water. Thus ladies who would scruple to disport themselves in Hyde Park or Regent's Park—however well able to take care of themselves on their skates—do not hesitate for a moment when a day's skating at the palace is suggested. In the morning, too, the timid learners can have the ice almost as much to themselves as if on a private pond, and thus have a good lesson and plenty of healthy exercise long before the spectators become too numerous, and tumbles, instead of being a cause for merriment, provoke rude remarks from a vulgar crowd. Happily there is little occasion even for fears of this nature, as somehow or other, everybody who comes to the Crystal Palace appears providentially gifted with the power of preserving his or her equilibrium, and those falls that do take place occur more from overtasking the sufferers' power of execution, or from accidental cannoning, than from positive ignorance. On the club pond, especially, falls are things that rarely happen; and, although we saw on Saturday a lady knocked over by a man who was entirely wrapped up in ideas of his own skill, regardless of where he was going, and who allowed her to scramble up with somebody else's help instead of offering to assist her himself, yet that was the only time that in the course of an hour or more we saw anybody 'come to grief.' On

THE SOUTHERN BASIN

there was a larger crowd than on the other, and the performers were not so expert in many instances; still there was little clumsiness and less absolute ignorance. The ice was fairly thronged, and it needed no little dexterity every now and again to avoid rushing into the arms of a lady swiftly advancing from the opposite direction, and not quite certain of her skating powers, or prevent oneself being cut down by some dashing aspirant who had got up to his full speed and required a clear course of some length ere he could pull up.

THE LARGE LAKE.

"There is a large piece of water, as those who are well acquainted with the palace gardens—a knowledge requiring some time and a considerable amount of walking to acquire—know very well, at the back and slightly to the right of the cricket-ground and gymnasium, surrounded by the most uncouth and formidable representations of mammoth monsters of antiquity. On the occasion of our visit, and despite that the Saturday half-crown admission might fairly be supposed to seriously affect the attendance, the ice on this lake was crowded all over with the same intermixture of male and female skaters so noticeable at the palace. Indeed, it may be said, without fear of contradiction, that fully one third of the performers are ladies—a very large proportion, which can only be accounted for by the reasons already advanced. On this lake, however, which lies rather low and is surrounded on all sides by hills and shrubberies, and therefore more sheltered than the other pieces of water, the ice appeared to be less safe, so that the precaution had been taken by the executive of stretching a rope across from bank to bank in order to afford a means of rescue in case of accident. There were also at the different basins plenty of men ready to give assistance; but we heard of no instance in which their services were found necessary. The ice evidently was not strong enough for the Scotchmen to indulge in their favourite pursuit of curling, and the only occupants of the snug corner which they kept apart for their play last winter were a young girl leading a still more youthful brother by the hand and giving him a lesson in skating. His movements were far more exciting to himself and calculated to keep his guide in a perpetual state of watchfulness than conducive to elegance or to inspire him with a feeling of being 'at home' on the ice in skates.

THE PRETTIEST SIGHT

was presented when it became dark, and, after a sharp shower of snow, which had fallen more or less all the afternoon, the sky cleared and the stars came out. Then the use of the gas-jets, which had been lighted some time previously, was manifest; and, as they were hung round the two basins on the lower terrace, duly lighting up the ice and its occupants, the scene became very weird-like and really impressive. The dark figures flitting about between the lights and shadows—the latter rendered still more intense by the brilliancy of the parts glistening in the light—and the whistling sound produced by the skates as they glided about, with the brilliantly lit-up palace in the foreground, and dark belts of trees rearward, gave a fairy-like and unnatural look to the picture, and reminded one strangely of the historic midnight revels on the Hartz Mountains. Here and there, too, one of the skaters would produce a lantern and render himself conspicuous amongst his unenlightened brethren, as a glowworm in the midst of ordinary earthworms.

"These festivities were not, however, of long continuance, as by eight o'clock the indefatigable guardians of the peace had succeeded in getting rid of the last straggler, for whom we should think there could have been little or no pleasure in remaining, as the palace lights were nearly extinguished, the lamps round the water had long given over burning, and the night itself was bitterly cold."

AFTER-DINNER QUIPS.

FOR UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

Why, when a young gentleman makes a declaration of love, and the young lady exclaims, "O!" are they mutually engaged?

Why, because they both make a vowel (avowal), of course.

Can you Guess

when an execution was put in the ark?

When the dove returned with the bay-leaf (bailiff).

Why

is a very fine Cigar like a policeman at the west end of London?

Because it cannot be found when wanted.

When

is Photographing an unfilial operation?

Don't you see? When the sun (son) takes off father.

A BLUNDER-BUS.

Kissing the wrong girl under the mistletoe.

The Little Un.

Lights were shining from the windows of the Golden Cross, and cheery music came from the courtyard into which its great archway led. Saturday night is almost a festival at Midchester, and the High-street was thronged with idlers, young men and women returning from the shops, and labourers buying their Sunday dinners; and Mark Bowley was hurrying home with his friend Mr. Joshua Strong when their path was blocked up by a crowd outside the hotel.

"Only a wretched fiddle," grunted Mr. Strong, as he elbowed his way along slowly. It was not his custom to go round anything.

"Not such a very wretched fiddler, though, is it?" asked Bowley, mildly. "Why, bless me! it's a little girl." And he pressed through the archway to obtain a better view of the baby fiddler.

She was a little thing, not more than seven years old, with a square, strong head, covered with curly brown hair which hung far below her shoulders. Her cheek nestled lovingly to a little violin, and, from a round, pretty face, her bright eyes glanced up merrily at the lookers-on.

She was playing, accompanied only by a harp, an air from Mellon's "Victorine"—"I never can forget." It is a ballad of the sentimental class, much [illegible] with a pretty shake, [illegible] quiver with her right wrist.

"Look here, Bowley!" said Strong; "I've played the fiddle for thirty years, and I never saw a shake made like that before. How do you do it, little Miss?"

"Oh! it's very easy, Sir," she answered, looking up roguishly. "You've only got to shake your wrist—so." And the flexible little right hand shook for a moment [illegible]

"[illegible] wrong side of thirty, my dear," said Bowley, good-humouredly. The child stared. The idea of *her* ever being on the "wrong side of thirty" seemed such a novelty that she did not know what to say.

"How old is your daughter, Sir?" asked Bowley [illegible]

"[illegible]," was the reply, [illegible] voice.

"What is your name, dear?"

"Eh? Little Un," she replied, quickly, again raising her violin and beginning an air of Balfe. At the end of the first verse she introduced her shake, glancing up archly at Strong's puzzled, pompous [illegible] While she played an ungainly young fellow [illegible] coppers from the admiring crowd. Bowley gave him sixpence and asked where they lodged. "I'm a musical man myself," he added. "That is, I keep a music-shop, and I should like to hear your—your sister play again."

"[illegible] and Groom," growled the young man. "She ain't my [illegible]," [illegible] passed [illegible] parently the close of [illegible] performance, and Bowley bade the Little Un [illegible] night, whereat she ap[illegible] rather surp[illegible], putting his arm [illegible] He [illegible] clever little man, w[illegible], knew a good deal a[illegible] passion or a vanity i[illegible] reasoning admiration [illegible] moustache and beard.

Two hours later the harpist took his little party home. He was in rather a good temper—they had taken more than usual that evening—and invested in a bottle of gin, which he thought would pleasantly occupy himself and his ungainly brother till an early hour on Sunday morning.

They soon reached the Horse and Groom, which [illegible] by no means one of the leading hostelries of the town, and sat down to supper in a dirty little room on the second floor. The Little Un got out half a loaf and a small oblong piece of cheese, by no means attractive in appearance or odour; poured herself out a glass of water, and sat down at the end of the table furthest from her father.

For if Mr. Henry Lister was displeased at anything—which was usually the case—he had a habit of venting his anger upon his daughter, through the medium of a fork, the handle of a knife, a bottle, or any other accessible object; and this, though doubtless better than allowing his wrath to accumulate, was not at the time pleasant.

Poor Little Un! She had lost her mother five years ago, and had since then struggled up in some marvellous way, at first to the unbounded annoyance of her father, who swore freely whenever he saw or heard her; but subsequently to his great profit, for his experiment at making an "infant phenomenon" of her was perfectly successful, and he had now lived entirely upon her earnings for eighteen months. She was, in truth, an artist—a poet; every beautiful sight and sound gave her a pleasure almost incomprehensible to those who are always surrounded by them; the bright bits of colour on the dresses of children playing in a narrow lane, the street-songs of the barrel-organ they were dancing to—little things that many men pass wholly unnoticed delighted this child, and lived long in her memory and her dreams.

Thus, she was not altogether miserable; but she had no other joys. No one in the world loved her. Her father [illegible] "had been a gentleman," people said—that is, he had once been able to speak the English language with some correctness, and had dressed not well, but expensively. As far as one could see, he had not a redeeming point. He thrashed his daughter till even his brother sometimes remonstrated; he got drunk whenever he could; he lied, and swindled, and made an unparalleled blackguard of himself on every occasion. She, from a natural goodness which I don't pretend to understand, did not hate him; it was not in her nature to hate anyone, but there was no one for her to love. She was growing up hard and hopeless, without faith. She had no future, except an endless repetition of a horrible past, and yet she managed to love something.

Her fiddle, it was a harsh, worthless instrument—her father had picked it up somewhere for five [illegible] occasional oath was particularly harmful to her.

Her father was, fortunately, a clever man, though too lazy ever to play really well; and he had taught [illegible]

[illegible] end of the room and crouched on the floor [illegible] violin, beginning a little air upon it softly.

"Shut up that row, will you?" [illegible] father. I think I have already men[illegible] her little mattress.

"Leave that fiddle behind," he said; "you'll be making a damned row on it in bed."

"We shan't hear it, you fool," observed his brother, politely; but Henry let off a volley of his favourite oaths—i.e., the strongest yet invented—with such promptitude that the Little Un ran to her bed at once, thus escaping with only one blow on her right arm, which, by-the-way, showed a large bruise for a week after.

She did not cry, however, but lay down and began to build dingy little castles in the air for her residences during the night. A few years later these waking dreams would have been by no means harmless, but now they were only poor visions of fruit and sausage-rolls—"sweets" she positively knew nothing of—with her dear fiddle by her side; and one joy more, which was her heaven—and a heaven incomparably more to my taste than the tempting existence described in an average tract.

No one can, perhaps, be without some visions of a higher—or, at all events, a happier—state; and this little one had passionate, hopeless longings, which [illegible] George, and an old woman who had *not* taken care of her when she was very young. She saw a little of the men with whom her father in their wanderings—though they generally preferred convivial meetings in a bar-parlour or "tap"—and now and then some of the women whom the occasionally brought home with them; one or two of the latter would sometimes say a kind word to her, but with little effect: the surface of her heart was hardened, and the wealth of love it held not touched at once.

On this night her thoughts were chiefly of her violin; strange airs floated through her mind; her dreams were vague and shapeless, but happy—so happy that she did not hear the noise in the next room, where the quarrel had, as usual, become a fight. After a short struggle Henry knocked his brother down, and resumed his gin and water calmly; and George soon rose to join him, wisely reflecting that if he did not begin at once he would have neither time nor opportunity to get drunk before daylight.

When the Little Un—who had never been christened, but answered to all names and epithets indiscriminately—at ten o'clock on Sunday morning rose, she found, on peeping into the room, that they were both asleep upon the floor. Experience taught her that in these cases it was best to return for an hour or two to her mattress, where she lay, dreaming happily, till she heard them rise, one after the other, [illegible]

[illegible] of the sorrow that [illegible] gradually awoke: "[illegible] pieces, like a flute." [illegible]

[illegible] meeting [illegible]

He op[illegible] alone, lying at the further [illegible] fiddle, br[illegible]

"What's the matter, dear?" he asked, moving towards her.

She started, but did not answer. His kind voice made no impression on her.

"Why; you've not broken your fiddle? Dear, dear! What will your father say?" Bowley thought that he had found the occasion of her grief; but, in reality, her father's anger had not once occurred to her. It did now, though; and she trembled.

"Come, come; let me look at it," he continued, in a slow, soft voice, which nearly all children loved. This one, however, only shivered and clasped the fiddle more firmly to her.

"Perhaps I can mend it"——

She shrieked and leapt to her feet. The little man felt almost frightened as she stood glaring at him with wild eyes, panting as she held the broken violin more tightly than ever for a moment. Then she seemed to realise hi[illegible]

[illegible] unlucky fiddle. It was not a very bad breakage, he found, when he sat down to look at it; but it was a minute or two before he was quite sure, and could look up gladly to the eager face by his side. She was standing now with clasped, uplifted hands; and as he said "I can mend it," he could not help drawing the pretty child to him and kissing her tearful eyes.

She sank down on his lap, sobbing, and he pressed her kindly to his breast, soothing her with childish words and comforting assurances. Seven years old, she [illegible] Poor Little Un. [illegible]



1. A fool and his money are soon parted. 2. As you make your bed, so you must lie in it. 3. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. 4. Knowledge is power. 5. Lips, however rosy, must be fed. 6. Love me, love my dog. 7. One eye-witness is better than ten hear-says. 8. No rose without a thorn. 9. Never find a thing before it is lost. 10. Every Jack has his Jill. 11. One man's meat is another man's poison. 12. One good turn deserves another. 13. Speech is the gift of all, but thought of few. 14. One tale is good till another is told. 15. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. 16. Where there's a will ([illegible]) there's a way.

PROVERBS FOR CHRISTMAS.

world was ever so black and hopeless as hers—hers with a soul that could live and love with a power not one in ten thousand ever dreams of?

Suddenly she started up. "When will you do it—when?" she cried eagerly.

"Soon, dear," he answered. "To-morrow, if you like.'

"Oh, now—now—now?" she wailed beseechingly; one who loved music could not resist nature's sweetest melody—a child's plaintive voice. He did not like working on Sunday; he thought it seemed a little thing to keep one day out of seven sacred to the God who loved him, but he remembered how on that day the cripple had been healed; he thought no hymn of praise could be more beautiful than the rejoicing of this little voice, so often sad.

"Come, then," he said; "we'll go to my shop and do it there." She twined her arms round his neck and kissed him; in a moment she seemed to have learnt all the sweet child's caresses that she could never have practised; in a moment his kindly heart had found the way to hers, which fiendish men had all her life been trying to block up. Love is stronger than hate.

She quickly washed herself, though she could not remove all traces of tears from her poor little red eyes, and put on all the little bits of finery which her father had considered likely to attract coppers. Bowley smiled at her gaudy little knots of ribbon as she returned; it would look strange, he thought, for a steady Midchester shopkeeper to be seen on Sunday with such a queer theatrical little being; but it is better to be laughed at than to wound a child's heart.

When they were in the street he took her hand; she glanced up, surprised, but very happy. He looked down, smiling kindly, and she thought she had never seen such a beautiful face.

It was so strange, so wonderful. Some one was kind to her, worked to help her, pitied her sorrow, tried to make her happy! Oh, she *was* happy! Her soul, that had groped so long in darkness, had found light—had found a living love. Not like the voice of her fiddle, which was but a part of herself; not like the happy cries of children, playing in the street regardless of her; not like the blue sky, the flowers, and the organs, that would shine and sing if she were not there. It was on *her* the kind face beamed from above; the smile was for her—the tear had been for the Little Un's sorrow. She could not understand it, but she did not want to. Darling! She was wildly happy; all the misery of her life was but a dark background which made this light of joy more brilliant. She tripped along the street, almost dancing, almost singing. Her face could not hold all her happiness, her radiant smile could not utter half of it; but the bright sky spoke it for her: the sunlight on the houses, the silent voice of quiet Sunday morning, were all the expression of her heart—her happy heart. Love floated round her; God clasped her in his arms; and through the bright



"Her cheek nestled lovingly to a little violin, and, from a round, pretty face, her bright eyes glanced up merrily at the lookers-on."

THE LITTLE UN.

vision she held fast the warm human hand that was leading and helping her onward.

They reached his shop, and went in. She sat down quietly to watch him, but in a few moments rose restlessly and hovered round him, finding out with wonderful quickness what he wanted and bringing it to him. It was a long job: his old servant had been in twice to tell him that dinner was ready before he had finished; but at last it was done, and he was putting the pegs in again, when one of them, which had been cracked at the breaking of the fiddle, broke in his hands.

"Oh, damn it!" remarked the Little Un, without the slightest hesitation.

Bowley was awfully shocked. He was not at all a prim little man, but to hear a child use such language seemed to him dreadful. After a moment, however, he recollected that she probably did not mean anything whatever by it, or even know that it was wrong; and he tried to explain to her as well as he could that people should not say such things, or take in vain the name of God—something of whose nature he, quite erroneously, supposed that she knew.

She did not understand, but saw that by avoiding such words she should please him; and the thought of doing anything that he told her was a pleasure. So she gladly promised that she would not swear again, and was going home, when it occurred to him that it was probably much past her dinner-hour.

"What time does your father dine, dear?" he asked.

"Do'n know; he 's mostly out all Sunday."

"Is he? Then you shall dine with me. Come in."

She started and gasped for a moment, unable to speak. She was to be with him an hour longer; and in such a beautiful house what *would* dinner be like? It must be only a dream, but so far better than any she had ever had before; more wildly improbable, and yet somehow more real.

They went into a pretty little parlour behind the shop. It was hung with bright pictures, and sweet-scented flowers filled the window; on one side stood a piano, and in the midst a table covered with a white cloth, on which were glasses, plates, and knives. There were chairs, a sofa, a fireplace filled with paper, white and coloured; the muslin curtains, the mahogany book-shelves—all seemed perfectly beautiful to her. Oh, what a happiness to live in such a place! Into this paradise she knew sorrow could never enter.

She sat down mutely, dumb with awe and gladness. The servant came in, looking very cross, to be sure, but bearing a splendid dish under a glittering cover. It was placed on the table, and Bowley rose, saying, when the servant had left the room,

"Do you know your grace, Little Un?"

She shook her head, not understanding him; and he continued,

"Say after me, 'For what we are going to receive'—— No! you'd better say 'Thank God for my'"——

But she had started up. "Oh, no, no!" she cried. "I told you I would never say bad words again, like God and damn. I will be good!" Her idea of goodness was only obedience; but I am not quite certain that it was much the worse for that.

The abyss of ignorance which these words revealed amazed Bowley, and he determined to try and

teach the poor little one a few things before she left the town; but at present he thought it best merely to explain that she did not quite understand him; and they began dinner accordingly with only a murmured grace from himself.

He helped her to a slice of cold roast pork, with apple-sauce and potatoes. Everything was beautifully clean and well cooked, and the Little Un's enjoyment was utterly indescribable. Then he got her a glass of milk, and when she had finished her first helping gave her some more.

When the meat was done he rang, and the servant brought in a steaming fruit-pudding. He began to cut it, not noticing the child's open eyes and quivering mouth.

"Am—am I to have some?" she asked at last, in a trembling, almost frightened, voice.

"As much as you like, Little Un."

To his surprise she buried her head in her arms upon the table, sobbing—sobbing from joy and love and fear. A little kindness, one soft heart among so many cruel ones, had done so much—had been so new, such a glorious revelation to the baby-wanderer.

He did not understand, but he went to her and put his arms fondly round her neck. One cannot help loving an unhappy child. She clung to him; with innumerable kisses she tried to express her love and thankfulness. By the joy his trivial kindness had given he saw what utter misery the child's life must be; and, as he bent over her, his tears fell on the little head, and he prayed that he might be able to do something to save this sweet soul from endless sorrow and certain sin.

She would not unclasp her arms, so he took her to his place, and, sitting in his lap, she ate a splendid piece of pudding, so visibly enjoying the sweet fruit that Mark Bowley was almost as happy as herself—happier even, perhaps, when she glanced quickly up, in her pretty birdlike way, to see whether he, too, appreciated the glorious pudding.

Then they had a little dessert. Some greengages were brought in, and he put them, according to his wont, upon the piano, and sat down at it to pass his afternoon in dreamy sacred music. He thought the little fiddler could not fail to love all melody, and chose the most simple and tuneful pieces for her sake.

She could hardly be said ever to have heard the piano really played before; it was another new world that he who had showed her love was opening to her. She knelt beside him, gazing up in wonder at his kind, good-looking face. He could do everything, she thought, as the glorious chords rolled around her, and the voices of the great masters spoke to the child-musician, their youngest worshipper.

Neither knew how the time passed till they were aroused by the clock of a neighbouring church striking five: the Little Un was frightened: it was just possible that her father might have returned by this time. Bowley gave her the violin, on to which he had put a new string, and she bade him good-by. He stood looking after the sturdy little figure as it plodded down the street, with the violin tucked under its left arm, eyed most suspiciously by a surly policeman, when the child turned to look once more at the little paradise she was leaving, and caught his eye watching her kindly. She rushed back to him and seized his hand.

"Oh! please, Sir," she said, "may I—may I see you again before we go?"

"Of course, Little Un; come whenever you can. If you're in any trouble I'll do my best to help you."

She bent down and kissed his hand; a clock chimed the quarter past, and she started home again at a quick trot.

Not quite quick enough, though. On what little things our whole lives seem to turn! If she had not run back to speak one last word to Bowley, she would probably have got home while her father was drinking down stairs; as it was he had just gone to their room, leaving George to finish his last glass of gin and water.

He was standing by the fireplace as she entered. "Drunk and savage," one glance told her.

"Come here," he muttered, in a deep, hardly audible growl. But she knew only too well what he meant. She went to him trembling.

"Where have you been, you little devil—with your fiddle, too? Here!"

He clutched at the neck; the glue was barely dry, and it broke. He seized her shoulder, swearing fearfully.

"What's this? Broken? I see. You broke it yourself, and you've been trying to glue it up without my knowing, you infernal little liar! Where's my stick?"

She screamed, though she knew no help was near. He took the stick, tore the clothes off her shoulders and back, and began to thrash her. The little thing shrieked, as blow after blow fell on her tender quivering flesh, but the savage brute went on.

There is no use in describing this sort of thing; it only sickens one; but we all know that it is true. Every day such things are happening; every day fiends like this man torture the bodies and souls of helpless darling children, whose lives should, one would think, have known no sorrow yet. We eat and drink and laugh, and do not think of it; if we did, what pleasure could ever make us happy?

He had never beaten her as he did this night. After a time she fainted, as George staggered up stairs to see what was the matter. As he stood in the doorway her father lifted his tired arm high for one last blow.

"Drop it, you brute!" his brother cried. Henry started, but only growled an oath and prepared to strike again. "Drop it, or I —— Look out, then!" George seized the large heavy candlestick with which he was wont to rap playfully the Little Un's head, and hurled it with drunken violence at his brother's right arm.

Henry swore, and started aside to avoid it; and, instead of hitting his arm, it struck him full on the forehead. He fell down with a groan beside the senseless body of the child.

George ran to him; he was quite dead. The heavy candlestick had completely crushed his head in—too easy a death for such a savage. The shock sobered his brother. He went to the cupboard and got some food and clothes, then, after a momentary shudder, turned the dead man's pockets out and took the money from them, leaving the watch and purse, and then left the house and ran quickly to a country lane near the railway station, where he waited for the evening train to London.

When the Little Un revived she found her father's arm across her. She supposed that he had fallen in a drunken sleep, but dared not move, for fear of rousing him. Thus she lay till night came on, and, as it became dark, fell asleep for a few hours. At midnight she woke and crept softly away from him. She was going to her own bed, when she remembered her fiddle, and returned to take it with her. It was moonlight, and as she stooped over her father's body she saw the blood-stained wound upon his forehead. For a moment she stared at it in terror, and then ran trembling from the room and down the stairs. The house door was locked, but she passed through the little yard into a back street, and stood motionless and without thought in the moonlight—bruised, half-naked—a baby alone in the world.

Soon she heard the measured step of a policeman approaching; instinctively she ran to the street where Bowley lived, and sat, hidden by the shade, in the doorway of his shop.

Unconsciously she was nursing the broken fiddle in her arms; she bent her head and saw it, again she began to cry, and sobbed herself to sleep on the cold stone door-step. Here she lay all night, till at seven o'clock Mark Bowley's servant opened the shop. The Little Un started and woke to find a woman's face frowning down upon her.

"What do want here, you dirty little brat?" asked the servant, half remembering the child.

"Mr. ——, Mr. ——." She did not even know her friend's name, and would probably have been quickly driven away by the [illegible] Hannah; had not Bowley himself at that moment entered the shop. The child crept out and ran to him; he bent over her, but started when he saw the frightful bruises on her bare back.

"What—what—damned villain has done this?" he gasped, hardly able to speak for rage and pity.

"Father. But I think he's dead now."

"Dead! Why? When? How did he die?"

She told him the little she knew; and he, after ordering Hannah to wash and clothe the little one, went swiftly to the [illegible]. The people of the house had not been into Lister's room, and knew nothing of what had happened; but all attributed the murder to George. However, at the inquest there was no direct evidence of any sort, and the usual verdict of "Wilful murder by some person unknown" was returned.

The Little Un had now lost every relation; for it was tolerably certain that George would never put forward any claim to her; and after some deliberation Bowley determined to adopt her. Every one of course advised him not to; but he said he was "not a marrying man," and wanted something to make his house a home. It was the best thing—that is, the wisest—that he ever did.

One would have thought that now she would be perfectly happy; and she was—almost. Only from his little back-garden she saw visions of her old heaven, which had not yet been realised for her. A dozen little girls of her own age sometimes came to play behind the house, and she often felt a longing to join them; but they seemed quite happy: they did not want her: she dared not.

But one day as she stood at the little gate with her violin, half-consciously she played a few notes upon it. The children stopped to listen. With a sudden hope, she began a lively dance tune, and soon they were all twisting round in quaint galops of their own invention. When she left off a pretty child, younger than herself, ran to her, and, taking her hands, led her to the little group. She played her merriest airs to them for some time, and then, putting away the fiddle carefully, joined in their delightful games. They had to teach her everything; but, whatever mistakes she made, she was happiest of them all; her laugh rang out almost wildly above the others—she ran and leapt like a prisoner newly released from his dreary dungeon.

At length it was time for them to go. She stood panting, with sparkling eyes and with hair in marvellous disorder, breathlessly replying to their good-byes. Last of all, the one who had led her to them came, and, with childish fondness, put her arms round Little Un's neck.

It was the first time. She burst into tears on the other's shoulder. The bondage of her baby-life was broken; she was a child among children. The heaven of her sweetest dreams had come at last—a little girl had kissed her.

EDWARD ROSE.

CHRISTMAS CHARITY.

NECESSITY OF GENEROUS GIVING.

All praise to Mr. Pereira, one of the Bethnal-green guardians! He has set an example to all his brethren. If his kind-hearted appeal be acted upon, no longer will Bethnal-green, or any other London district, disgrace itself by the old, old verdict, "Death from Starvation." Fresh, may be, from the vivid pages of "Blade o' Grass," he has made an exploration, the results of which he related to the Bethnal-green board of guardians, on the 13th inst. Mr. Pereira said he had made an arrangement with Mr. Arnott, the officer who appeared to have given the greatest amount of relief, to go round a part of his district, in order that he might judge for himself as to whether the temporary relief given had been excessive or not. He now felt bound to say that, having made a tour of inspection, he was only surprised that the relieving-officer had been so moderate in dispensing discretionary relief. The sights he saw of poverty, filth, disease, and misery completely horrified him. In some of the houses he saw people lying dead on the beds and others dying. The scenes were truly heatrending, and beyond all conception. Some of the dwellings were in such a disreputable state that he did not believe a scrubbing-brush had ever been used on the floor. In one place he came upon what appeared to be a heap of soot, but on examination he found it was an old counterpane, under which was a woman, lying stark naked, on a hard bed, with a child by her side; whilst the husband, who appeared to be a disreputable fellow, was sitting smoking his pipe. He had never before had the slightest idea that such places of wretchedness were to be found in the parish of Bethnal-green, and he hoped the board would use their utmost endeavours to bring about a different state of things.

With this timely preface by a Bethnal-green guardian, we beg to call the attention of our charitable readers to the following letters:—

CHRISTMAS IN COW-CROSS.

(*To the Editor.*)

Sir,—We are most anxious to provide a plain but substantial dinner for 800 families—the [illegible] of the poor—at their own homes, in the centre of the metropolis, on Christmas Day. Also, on or about Jan. 3, to give our school children a dinner of roast beef and plum-pudding, in the Mission Hall, White Horse-alley, Cow-cross-street, West Smithfield.

Contributions will be thankfully received by Alexander Rivington, Esq., Treasurer, Cow-cross Mission, Free Schools, and Soup-Kitchen, 52, St. John-square, E.C.; or by, yours, &c.,

WILLIAM CATLIN,
Superintendent.

18, Hemingford-road, Islington, N.

P.S. 400 children and 400 families have a weekly dinner throughout the winter.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN ST. GILES'S.

(*To the Editor.*)

Sir,—Last Christmas Eve one hundred destitute families in St. Giles's were supplied gratuitously with materials for a good substantial dinner, consisting of 4 lb. of beef, 1 lb. of plums, 1 lb. of currants, half a quartern of flour, ¼ lb. of tea, and 1 lb. of sugar. The gratitude on receiving this opportune gift can be better imagined than described, and many a home in St. Giles's that would otherwise have been the picture of wretchedness and misery on Christmas Day (being destitute of the common necessaries of this life) was rendered cheerful by the [illegible] meal, which was to them a sumptuous repast. We are most anxious to repeat this act of Christian compassion, feeling persuaded that it is quite as much needed as last year. Permit me to beg a [illegible] your readers to assist in sending a gleam of sunshine, if only for a few hours, into the homes of these poor distressed folks in St. Giles's. Help will be gratefully received by Mr. James Smith, 467, New Oxford-street; the bankers, Messrs. Twining, 215, Strand; or by, yours sincerely,

GEO. HATTON,
Superintendent of the St. Giles's Christian Mission.

12, Ampton-place, Regent-square, W.C.

CHRISTMAS DINNERS FOR POOR CHILDREN.

To Mr. Williams, secretary of the Boys' Refuge, at Great Queen-street, any spare shillings or sixpences may be safely sent with the full confidence that every coin will go towards filling a destitute waif who would otherwise be sent empty away. Yet another appeal we may print:—

(*To the Editor.*)

Sir,—The time is drawing very near when it is customary to give our poor destitute children their usual Christmas dinner of roast beef and plum-pudding, also weekly dinners during the succeeding three or four months. May I be permitted to call your readers' attention to the fact that this season, though a festive one to many, is yet very trying to the poor and wretched inmates of the courts and alleys? Contributions of money, clothing, provisions, &c., will be gratefully received by, yours respectfully,

DUNCAN ANDERTON, Hon. Sec.

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[illegible]

Extract from the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, [illegible]

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5. Blessed for ever.
6. There is a calm for those who weep.
7. Catch the Sunshine.
8. Ave Verum.
9. Quartet.
10. Come and rest, ye weary.
11. O Salutaris.
12. Russian Hymn.
13. But the Lord is mindful of His own.
14. Prayer of the oppressed ("Masaniello").
15. Sacred March.
16. Voluntary.
17. Cavatina.

35.—THIRTEEN NEW AND POPULAR COMIC SONGS.

Pretty Jemima.
Queer News from Home.
Corporal O'Kelly.
Susan, Susan, pity my confusion.
Clementina, of Turtle Dove Cottage.
Rather too good to be true.
[illegible]
General Jinks.
He's just the man that would.
The pretty London ruff.
I'm Ninety-five.
The nice little laundress of Kennington-gate.
The merriest girl that's out.

27.—NINE CHRISTY MINSTREL SONGS.

1. U-pi-dee (Howard Paul's Edition).
2. The Dutchman's Wee Dog.
3. Write me a letter from home.
4. Ring the bell, Watchman.
5. Driven from home.
6. Mother kissed me in my dream.
7. Say a kind word when you can.
8. Mother will comfort me.
9. Shoo-Fly, don't bother me.

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Tom Bowling.
The Death of Nelson.
Poor Jack.
Britons, Strike Home!
Stand to your guns.
British Grenadiers.
The Red, White, and Blue.
The Tight Little Island.
Hearts of Oak.
God Save the Queen.
Rule, Britannia!

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[illegible]
[illegible] Horn.
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[illegible] the Rhine.
[illegible]therland.
[illegible]
Britannia.
The Tight Little Island.
[illegible] of England.
[illegible] and Blue.
[illegible]
[illegible] Wallace bled.
[illegible]le of Edinboro' Town.
[illegible] Flower of Dunblane.
[illegible]' Through the Rye.
[illegible] Sweet Home.
Kelvin Grove.
The Keel Row.
Bonnie Dundee.
The Lass o' Gowrie.
Caller Herrin'.
March of the Men of Harlech.
Dulce Domum.
Farewell! but whenever you welcome the hour.
Has sorrow thy young days shaded?
Believe me, if all those endearing young charms.
The Minstrel Boy.
Last Rose of Summer.
The harp that once thro' Tara's halls.
Love's young dream.
Rich and Rare.
The young May moon.

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[illegible]
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The meeting of the Waters.
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[illegible]
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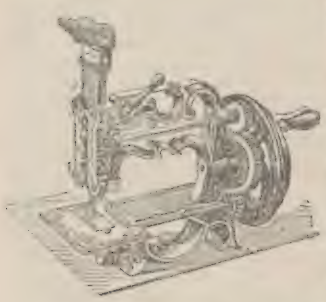
THE ONLY SEWING-MACHINE really requiring no Personal Instruction.

ECONOMICAL IN USE, RAPID AND EFFICIENT IN OPERATION, ELEGANT AND DURABLE IN CONSTRUCTION, and so exceedingly SIMPLE in MANAGEMENT, that no one, however unskilled, inexperienced, nervous, or feeble, *can* fail to work it with real pleasure and entire success.

For Reliability, Ease, Silence of Motion, Perfection and Elasticity of Stitch, and Real Worth it has no Equal.

After many years of unparalleled competition in the Sewing-Machine Trade, this favourite continues to meet with an increasing demand in the English and Colonial Markets; this fact, together with the numerous Testimonials daily received from all parts of the Globe, stamp it the "Sewing-Machine of the Age," alike suited to the Boudoir of Royalty and the humble room of the Seamstress. It is the cheapest and undoubtedly the most efficient Machine for every kind of family, household, dressmaking, and tailoring work.

Every Machine Guaranteed to work equal to Patterns, and Ladies are particularly requested to compare these samples with those of more expensive Machines.



INFERIOR IMITATIONS ARE NUMEROUS.

Easy terms of payment for those who need them, without interest, viz:—

20s.	to accompany order (P.O. Orders payable at Chief Office)		
10s	to be remitted at end of the first month.		
10s.	"	"	second "
6s.	"	"	third "
56s.			

being the price of the Machine complete in deal packing-case.

Should any Purchaser of "WEIR'S 55s. Sewing-Machine" be dissatisfied with it within one month after purchase, the full amount will be returned, or a Machine by any other maker supplied, and the full amount of "Weir's" allowed for.

A Dressmaker can, with the greatest ease, earn from 35s. to 45s. per week with this Machine, the Machine being capable of making from 1500 to 2000 stitches per minute.



Intending purchasers of Sewing-Machines should not be misled by representations made by Makers and Agents of high-priced Machines. It is to realise a larger profit that they prefer to recommend such. The extraordinary and increasing sale of "Weir's 55s. Machine" is the best proof of its usefulness.

CAUTION AGAINST IMITATIONS, &c.—*Numerous worthless imitations of this well-tested and much-admired Machine are being made of inferior material and workmanship, and offered for sale in all parts of the country and abroad as "The Weir," or "The Weir Principle;" none are genuine without the full Name and Address stamped into the Steel Work Plate through which the needle passes, thus:—*

JAS. G. WEIR,
2, Carlisle-street, Soho-square.
London.

Registered Trade Mark.

To insure getting the genuine Machine, see your account is made out for "One Weir's 55s. Sewing-Machine," and not one "Weir" Machine.

It is guaranteed to hem, fell, seam, bind, tuck, quilt, gather, braid, and embroider equal to any £10 machine, and to sew on every kind of material, from book-muslin, cambric, and silk, to the coarsest woollen fabric or leather.

Every Machine is thoroughly tested, and sent out threaded up ready for use, with full Printed and Illustrated Directions for Self-Instruction, carefully packed, and promptly dispatched to any part of the World. Machines packed in Zinc for India and the Colonies at a few hours' notice.

SECURE PACKING GUARANTEED.

The New Illustrated Prospectus and Coloured Sample Sheet, mounted with nine different specimens of work done by this Machine, together with 400 Testimonials from all parts of the world, post-free.

All Communications to be addressed to the Office and Show-Rooms,

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WORKS—BELMONT-STREET, CHALK FARM-ROAD, N.W.

London: Printed and Published at the Office, 2, Catherine-street, in the Parish of St. Mary-le-Strand, in the County of Middlesex, by THOMAS FOX, 2, Catherine-street aforesaid.—SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1871.

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Christmas Supplement, December 23, 1871.



A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Wake all music's magic pow'rs
On this blissful morning;
Born to-day, the Child is ours,
Theme of Prophet's warning;
Giant in the race He tow'rs,
Toil and danger scorning.

Let this glorious holiday
Find such holy spending,
That the simple-hearted dm
Joy without offending;
And sweet charity may stay,
With our concourse blending.

O how bright is this day made,
Day with radiance glowing,
Which the Light of Light displayed,
Light in darkness showing;
Chasing thus death,s gloomy shade,
Brightness o're us throwign.

Risen to-day in splendour bright,
Shining to all ages,
Beams the Sun, whose distant light
Touch'd the Prophet' pages;
Now, to end the reign of night,
Christ His power engages.

From Novello's "Christmas Carols."

Christmas Supplement, December 23, 1871.



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